



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

ST. EPHREM, THE NEW DOCTOR OF THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH

It is one of the mysteries of Providence, that men who had once acquired a world-wide reputation, or events whose influence was felt for centuries, should sometimes disappear completely, almost suddenly, from the world's attention, and after the lapse of ages be resurrected again, when there is need, to further the progress of religion and of civilization. Every student of Church History is aware how the Roman Catacombs, rediscovered in the sixteenth century, brought a flood of illustrious testimonials to the genuineness and unbroken continuity of our faith; and how the multitude of biblical and patristic manuscripts, unearthed within the last century, have awakened eloquent voices from a remote past, to rebuke the pretensions of Higher Criticism, and to testify to the perfect harmony of antiquity with the Catholic voice of today.

Some such destiny, it would seem, is now at hand for the ancient Syriac Church, and more conspicuously for St. Ephrem, its most venerable Patriarch. Thanks to the researches of distinguished scholars in the last two centuries, from the first of the Assemani down to Mgr. Lamy of Louvain, and more particularly, to the great Encyclical of Pope Benedict XV, which has only recently focussed universal attention on St. Ephrem and the Oriental Churches in general, the majesty of an ancient literature, we might say of a whole civilization, is again about to be revealed. It may be, the Second Spring of the Eastern Church is now at hand; or at least, we can now hope to see the dawn of a better understanding between the East and the West.

"We think the moment opportune," says the Holy Father, "now that the terrible war is over, and while the people of the Orient, having regained their liberty, and freed religion from secular domination, are now striving to adjust their individual nationalities in accordance with ancient institutions, to propose to them all, for their earnest imitation and zealous honor, a splendid example of learning, of holiness, and of patriotism, in the person of St. Ephrem, the Syrian."¹

But while St. Ephrem has always been revered in the East

¹ *Encyclical*. "Principi Apostolorum"—Oct. 5, 1920.

as one of the greatest Fathers of the Church, and many of his writings are even now to be found inserted in the Liturgy and Offices of the Syrian, the Nestorian, the Maronite, the Coptic, the Greek, and the Slavic Rites, our Saint, and the Syriac language more so, was for long ages almost completely forgotten in the West. Even today, when the Supreme Pontiff reaches into antiquity, and selects the humble Deacon of Edessa, to raise him up as a Doctor of the Universal Church, the Encyclical is greeted with a mild surprise. So little is yet known of this remarkable character, or of that vast accumulation of Theological, Exegetical and Liturgical Learning, that was bequeathed to the early Church by the genius of St. Ephrem. And yet he was called "the great river Euphrates of the Church" * * * these are the picturesque words of St. Gregory of Nyssa * * * "who irrigating by his learning the whole Christian world, makes it to bring forth for fruit a hundred-fold." ²

There are, indeed, many conflicting details in the various extant accounts of the life of St. Ephrem. No satisfactory biography of the Saint has yet been written, and his voluminous writings have never been collected into any complete edition. But certain outlines of his remarkable career are sufficiently well-defined. He was born at Nisibis, in Mesopotamia, about the year 306 A. D., early in the reign of Constantine the Great. His mother was a Christian, of humble origin, from Amida, a town near by; his father, according to some Syriac accounts, was a pagan priest, who drove him from home because of his sturdy piety, though the lad was only twelve years old; but according to St. Gregory of Nyssa and other writers, both his parents were good Christians and had the honor of suffering as Confessors for the Faith. Be that as it may, it is certain that the young man early came under the influence of St. James, the Bishop of Nisibis, one of the Fathers of the Council of Nicaea, and that he received a thorough Christian education and was baptized at the age of eighteen. This delay of Baptism, which we know was even longer in the case of St. Augustine and others, was not uncommon in the early ages of the Church. But it is doubtful whether St. Ephrem really accompanied St. James to the Council of Nicaea, as some authors relate; though we are told that even then, in 325, when he was but nineteen years old, he was already

² *Sermo in Vitam Ephraemi.*

a deacon and a monk, and was remarkable for his learning. The Saint himself naively tells us in his Confessions, that as a young man he was very remiss in religious matters, that he was passionate and quarrelsome, and free with his tongue, and that he was possessed of rash ideas on fatalism and predestination. But his biographers record that after he became a monk, he was a mirror of meekness, and no one ever knew him to be angry. In appearance, he was small of stature, and grave of features; he never laughed; and during all his life as a monk his food was only bread and dry vegetables, his drink only water. But together with these austere characteristics we can detect, in scattered stories told of him, the genuine sense of humour of a true saint; for when once his friend Julianus, abbot of a monastery near Edessa, said to him, "as Magdalen washed the feet of Our Lord, so I wash with tears the name of Our Lord wherever I see it written," the Saint replied: "God receive your pious resolution, brother; but I beg of you, spare the books."

Tradition tells us that one of the decrees of the Council of Nicaea ordained that bishops should establish schools in all their dioceses. St. Ephrem was placed at the head of the School of Nisibis. Here the Saint seems to have been engaged chiefly in expounding Holy Scriptures, and in composing various controversial works against heretics, and in supervising with becoming splendour the liturgical ceremonies of the diocese. But his reputation as a public-spirited citizen was even greater than his fame as a scholar, for in three separate sieges of the city by the Persian army, in 338, in 350, and in 362 A. D., his encouragement and skillful advice was of considerable assistance to the beleaguered city. The story is told of the dramatic ending of the first of these sieges. The Saint appeared on the walls at the head of a solemn procession, chanting hymns and prayers. All at once a veritable cloud of insects descended on the enemy's camp, irritating the elephants and the cavalry, and throwing the whole army into confusion. A complete rout followed. But in 363 A. D., after the disastrous expedition of Julian the Apostate, the next emperor, Jovian, was glad to save the remnants of the Roman army by a treaty, and surrendered the city of Nisibis to the Persians. This was the signal for a general exodus of the Christian population, who were fearful of persecution under Persian rule; and the majority of them, with St. Ephrem at their head, retired to Edessa, the modern Urfa, on the east bank of

the Euphrates. Here our Saint lived the remaining ten years of his life; and, as his abundant labors and writings at this time prove, this was the most fruitful period of his career. For a while he lived as an anchorite outside the city, but his reputation soon attracted scholars and disciples around him, among whom the most famous whose names have come down to us are Zenobius, Mar Abas and St. Isaac the Great. At this time, most likely, was founded the celebrated School of Edessa, the School of the Persians, as it was then called, because of the many Christian emigrés enrolled in its classes from Nisibis and elsewhere in Persian territory. The influence of this famous school was destined to spread Syriac language and literature for five centuries, over the whole region from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf. Here, as at Nisibis, St. Ephrem's teaching consisted chiefly in exposition of Holy Scripture, and all his vast commentaries (St. Gregory tells us that he commented *ad verbum* every book of the Old and New Testament), were either written or gathered together at this time. Here, too, were composed the greater number of his sermons, discourses and hymns. It is asserted by Photius that over a thousand homilies were known to bear his name; the Syrians attribute twelve thousand hymns to his pen, and others a greater number still; while Sozomen, the Greek historian, who claims enthusiastically that Ephrem's works surpass even all the Greek writers in splendor of oratory and sublimity of thought, goes on to say that his hymns and discourses, which are nearly all in metric form, make up the amazing total of three hundred thousand verses. Indeed, even after we allow for numerous interpolations, and for the abundant repetitions so common to all Oriental poetry, the actual quantitative output of St. Ephrem's pen, as now known and admitted to be genuine, verges on the marvelous.

But the Saint did not hesitate to abandon his literary activity when necessary for the good of the people. He was, indeed, the guardian angel of Edessa. Most of his biographers relate how during a period of general famine, his well-known zeal and untiring charity were the only means of procuring relief for the starving people. He was actually able to persuade the wealthier citizens, many of whom were even then smarting under his constant rebukes for their worldliness and heretical practices, to band together under his direction and to establish hospitals and dispensaries in various parts of the city; nor did he return to his

cell, we are told, until the next harvest was assured. The Saint died in 373 A. D., on the 18th of June, and his Feast has now been transferred to that day. He left many instructions to his sorrowing disciples and to his beloved people of Edessa; and there is scarcely a document in all Patristic literature more touching and humble than the Testament of St. Ephrem.

It cannot be denied, however, that there are still many important questions as yet unsolved in the history of St. Ephrem. To the exegete and the apologist there is the dispute as to which version of the Bible he employed, the Old Syriac of Edessa, (2nd Cent.), or the famous Peshitto Version. To the historian there fall many difficulties of chronology, especially as regards the time of his birth, his life in Nisibis, his sojourn of eight years in Egypt, and his visit to St. Basil in Caesarea, in Cappadocia. But to the theologian and the canonist is left the most famous and most difficult problem of all, and that is the question of St. Ephrem's ecclesiastical rank. Was he ever ordained a priest? If so, why his universal title of Deacon of Edessa? On one side of the controversy we have the Bollandist Fathers, who rely, among other weighty authorities, on the explicit testimony of St. Amphilochius, Bishop of Iconium, a contemporary of our Saint. In his life of St. Basil, ch. 14, the Bishop describes the actual Ordination, and expressly states that the "interpreter was ordained a Deacon, but he himself (Ephrem) a Presbyter." In a later chapter is related a long story of a penitent woman who is sent by St. Basil to St. Ephrem for absolution. Other testimonials are also available in this connection; but if this work by St. Amphilochius were certainly genuine, the whole question would be settled, and the traditional opinion would have no value. On the other hand however, we have almost a consensus of testimony, from Sozomen, Palladius and St. Jerome, to Baronius, Bellarmine and Mgr. Lamy, to the tradition that St. Ephrem remained all his life only a Deacon.

It is clear then, that for an adequate appreciation of St. Ephrem's career, and of his influence on the post-Nicene age of the Church, a more complete history of the period is needed than is at present available. But we can at least see from the tributes of some of the Fathers, which at times seem even extravagant, that his commanding figure must have dominated the Eastern Church in much the same way that St. Chrysostom dominated the Greek Church, and St. Augustine the Western. His works

were nearly all translated, sometimes immediately and during his own lifetime, into Greek and Latin; and later translations into Arabic, Coptic and other languages made them as familiar to the monks of the African deserts as to those of Syria and Persia. Indeed the Saint appears to have enjoyed even a wider vogue in religious circles than our own Rodriguez of today. There is one collection of his ascetical discourses, copied in the 12th century over a faded Bible MS. of the 5th century, that has preserved for us the famous Codex Ephraemi Rescriptus, the fourth in importance among the great uncials of the Greek Bible. His Scriptural Commentaries were studied and quoted by writers of the Schools of Antioch, Alexandria, Caesarea and Edessa, while many of his sermons were used as models in the Academies of Constantinople and even at Rome. St. Chrysostom points to him as "that celebrated Ephrem, who glorified the Church of God by his virtues and his writings * * * who is the rouser of the sluggard, the consoler of the afflicted, the mirror of monks, the discipline of youth." ³ "Ephrem's life and the splendor of his doctrine," writes St. Gregory of Nyssa, "has lighted up the whole world; he is known almost wherever the sun shines." ⁴ We are told that St. Basil marveled at his erudition, and confessed himself indebted to St. Ephrem for the interpretation of many obscure passages of Holy Scripture. But if some of these testimonials appear colored and rhetorical, we are at least prepared to form a safe opinion of his reputation from the sober words of St. Jerome: "Ephrem the Syrian," he writes, "attained such great renown, that his writings are now read publicly, in some Churches, after the Holy Scriptures. I myself have read his treatise on the Holy Spirit, translated from Syriac into Greek, and even in the translation I recognized the power of this sublime genius." ⁵ There is no need to dwell here on the enthusiasm with which Syriac writers in every age speak of their great Patriarch, applying to him various picturesque titles, indeed not entirely unjustified. To them he is "the Prophet of the Syrians," "the Harp of the Holy Ghost," "the Eloquent Mouth," "the Pillar of the Church," "the Doctor of the World."

But what is of chief interest to us at the present time is the

³ *Oratio de Consumm. Saec.*

⁴ *Sermo in Vitam Ephraemi.*

⁵ *De Viris Illustr.*

value to the Church of the works of St. Ephrem, and the grounds for his selection as a Doctor of the Universal Church. As we gather from the words of the recent Encyclical, the Deacon of Edessa holds a commanding position as a source of Ecclesiastical History, especially as regards the religious struggles of the 4th century; he is a supreme model of sacred eloquence, and moreover, is ranked high among the greatest poets of the early Church; but what is of much more moment, St. Ephrem is conspicuous among all the Fathers by the very abundance of his commentaries and sermons, as an orthodox interpreter of Holy Scripture, and as a witness to the most important doctrines of dogmatic theology; and finally, a fact which is perhaps little known, the Saint is now acknowledged among scholars as the Father of sacred liturgy and Church music.

We can touch but briefly on some of these aspects of St. Ephrem's varied activities. As he had long been familiar with the successful methods of the heretic Bardesanes and his son Harmonius in the 2nd century, and of Arius in his own times, all of whom wrote numerous poems and set them to popular melodies, in order thus to spread their false doctrines among the populace, St. Ephrem did not hesitate to borrow the enemy's weapons in the cause of truth, and in his turn wrote, with even greater success, scores of Catholic hymns and melodies, to popularize orthodox doctrines and to confute the heretics in their own field. In the MSS., there have been discovered by Mgr. Lamy at least 75 different melodies indicated at the head of the hymns, just as in many hymnologies of today. It is in these hymns especially that we find valuable testimony to the ceremonies of the ancient Ritual, as for instance for Baptism at the Paschal season, for Confirmation by the Bishop or Pontifex, for Holy Communion when received in the hands, according to the ancient discipline of the Church, etc. Thus began St. Ephrem's musical and liturgical work in the Churches of Nisibis, and continued later on at Edessa. We read glowing eulogies⁶ of his genius for organization and of his wonderful success in training various choirs of nuns and of young men, and in teaching the people to sing at the Church services on all the principal festivals. The fame of the splendor of these celebrations was spread even in the West. We all know how St. Augustine speaks of the flood of

⁶ THEODORET, L., IV, c. 27.

consoling tears which overwhelmed him as he listened, in the Church of Milan, to the majestic harmonies of the alternate singing then lately introduced by St. Ambrose, as he says, "in the manner of Oriental regions."⁷ The recent Encyclical even declares that there are undoubted evidences to show that the Liturgical music of both Constantinople and of Milan, and consequently that Gregorian Music also, was originally derived from the Syrian antiphonaries which owe their origin to St. Ephrem. It is indeed quite certain that many of the present day Gregorian melodies are directly traceable to Eastern sources.

As a sacred Orator, perhaps no phrase better describes St. Ephrem than that in which Ebed-Jesu, Bishop of Nisibis in the 6th century, calls him the Prophet of the Last Judgment. In all his sermons, indeed in most of his hymns and discourses, it is rare that St. Ephrem does not lead us to serious thoughts on our last end. There is the same vividness of conviction, the same dread of hell and judgment that is so evident in St. Jerome. "But no preacher of any age," says Guillon⁸ "ever presented with such energy, and with such a variety of realistic pictures, the frailness of this life, the nothingness of earthly things, and the terrors of death and judgment, as St. Ephrem." One sermon in particular, on the Last Day⁹ is a veritable drama, so vivid and realistic that it remained long celebrated throughout the Orient as the greatest sermon ever preached on the subject. It is spoken of by St. Gregory as needing only the actual presence of the Supreme Judge to make it a reality; it was praised enthusiastically by Vincent of Beauvis in the thirteenth century, while Dante himself is said to have borrowed from its vivid imagery. Some of his thoughts and expressions sound intensely modern. "You ask me," he says, "if such or such a priest is worthy of his ministry. What is that to you? He is a priest. Take care you do not violate the precept of Christ, to honor him as such. Gold is not less gold, even if you find it encased in mud." "If when traveling, one comes across a blood-stained corpse, he is seized with horror, he trembles and grows pale; but bring before his eyes and din in his ears the story of the Crucified, dying for our sins—he is distracted, he turns to other things."

⁷ ST. AUG., *Confessions*, IX, 7.

⁸ *Cours des Peres*, Vol. VIII, St. Ephrem.

⁹ *Vatican Edition—Greek and Latin*—Vol. II, p. 192.

But it is pre-eminently in Dogmatic Theology that St. Ephrem takes high rank as an ancient Father and Doctor of the Universal Church. He was her champion against all the heresies of the 4th century, all of which, alas, chose their chief battleground in this very region of Asia Minor. There the religious struggles were frequent and violent. In Edessa alone, twelve different heretical sects were to be found. There were the Gnostic followers of Bardesanes among the well-to-do classes; the accomplished and smooth-tongued Arius, whose doctrines were spread chiefly among the populace, but at times pervaded all grades of society; the ascetical Marcion, and Apollinaris, whose heresies still persisted from an earlier age; there were the Manicheans, the Encratists, the Astrologers, and many others, most of whom are frequently met with in the sermons and hymns of St. Ephrem. But as the Saint's method of controversy was not always by direct refutation, but more often by clear, concise exposition of orthodox Catholic teaching, the historian is often disappointed not to find a definite statement of the heretical doctrine in question. Neither does he seem ever to indulge in mere theological speculation. He is throughout the Teacher, proposing to our unquestioning faith, Truth as it was handed down from the beginning, and freely appealing to that unvarying Apostolical Tradition which is the familiar argument of all the Fathers.

St. Ephrem's teaching on the august mystery of the Holy Trinity follows that of the Nicene Council, and though in Syriac there is no word the exact equivalent of the Greek "Homoousios"—Consubstantial—he uses various expressions like "Equal in Essence," "Son of the Nature" (as is done in the Syriac version of Nicene Creed), or similar phrases, to take the place of this term.¹⁰ He even anticipated the great controversies of the famous Filioque; for the hymn to the Blessed Trinity¹¹ contains this doctrine explicitly: "the Father begetting, the Son Begotten of His Bosom, the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father *and the Son*; the Father, Maker of the world from nothing, the Son, Creator who established all things with his Father; the Holy Spirit, Paraclete and Merciful, in whom are perfected all that was or is or shall be." Again, the unity and distinction of the

¹⁰ ASSEMANI, *Bibl. Orient.* I, p. 111.

¹¹ LAMY, *Hymni et Sermones*, III, p. 242.

Divine Persons is clearly expressed: "one passes not into the other, one is joined to the other, one is distinct from the other; behold One is Three, and the Three are One, mingled and not confused, distinct and not separated."¹² In still another hymn we are given a long and beautiful exposition of the familiar comparison with the Sun, its Light and Heat, to represent the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Not less marvelous, as an anticipation of the difficulties proposed by the Monophysites and the Monothelites of the 6th century, is St. Ephrem's doctrine on the dual Nature and the Single Personality of Christ, our Lord. "Praiseworthy and Wise is He, who joined and mingled Divinity with Humanity: one nature from on high, one from below, He mixed like two liquids (yet not confused), and became a Person, the God-Man."¹³ "When you see Him in heaven, there is nothing like to Him; when you find Him on earth, he is simply Man; turn your eyes to the right, and lo, myriads on myriads of Angels ministering unto Him, while Cherubim and countless watchers cry out Holy, Holy. But look on Him upon the earth, and lo, the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests, but He who is the Son of God has not whereon to lay His head."¹⁴

As for St. Ephrem's loyalty to the Primacy, we cannot do better than repeat his striking testimony, from distant Edessa, to the Supreme Authority of Christ's Vicar: "Blessed art thou, O Peter, the head and the tongue of the Body of Brethren, the Body which is formed from the union of the Disciples: the true revelation of the Father is heard, favoring Peter, who becomes the unshaken rock."¹⁵ Another hymn records a sublime colloquy between Christ and His Vicar on earth, in which Our Lord speaks thus to Peter: "Simon, my Disciple, I have made thee the foundation of my holy Church; I have called thee the Rock, that thou mightest sustain the whole edifice. Thou art the watcher over those who build for me a Church on earth. If they build not aright, I have placed thee a foundation, do thou restrain them. Thou art the fountain head from which my doctrine is drawn; thou art the head of my disciples, through thee will I

¹² ASSEMANI, *Ibidem*, p. 107.

¹³ ASSEMANI, *Ibid.*, p. 80.

¹⁴ LAMY, *Ibid.*, p. 352.

¹⁵ RAHMANI, *Hymni S. Ephraemi*, p. 45.

give drink to the nations. I have given to thee the keys of my kingdom, and behold I make thee Lord over all my possessions.”¹⁶

In much the same way numerous other details of Catholic doctrine appear in St. Ephrem, as though with a sort of marvelous prescience of later controversies. But it can be said with truth that nowhere does his language rise to more lyric heights of pure poetry than when he is speaking of the Real Presence in the Blessed Eucharist, or the praises of the Blessed Mother of God.

To cite a few brief passages: Among the Syriac names for the Holy Eucharist even today, the most celebrated is the word *Gmurtho'*, which means literally the Live-Coal, a name which was given to it because St. Ephrem long ago applied a beautiful commentary on Isaiah 6, 6—where the Cherubim purified the lips of the Prophet with a live-coal from the Altar—to the Blessed Sacrament. There are in the hymns many beautiful tributes to the Real Presence: “The Priests of old desired thy beauty, and saw it not; the Priests who came after them hated thee, and treated thee unworthily; but the Priests of today embrace thee in their arms, O Bread of Life, who, coming down from heaven, hath united thyself to our senses.”¹⁷ Another stanza reads: “In a new way, His Body is united to our bodies, His Blood most pure is diffused through our veins * * * behold, Fire and the Spirit” (this is a familiar metaphor in St. Ephrem) “in the womb of thy Mother; Fire and the Spirit in the waters of the Jordan; Fire and the Spirit in the Bread and the Chalice. * * * It is thee, O Lord, we eat, thee we drink, not that we may consume thee, but that we may live in thee.”¹⁸

But it may be doubted if this gifted poet ever sings more beautifully than when chanting the praises of the Blessed Mother. There are exquisite gems of devotion and tender thought in stanza after stanza of the hymns on the Nativity, on Virginity, and on the Feasts of our Lady. Theologians find, for instance, a definite tribute to the traditional belief in the Immaculate Conception in such passages as the following: “Both were without blemish, both were most pure, Mary and Eve: but one was the cause of our death, the other, of our life.”¹⁹ “Thou,

¹⁶ LAMY, I, p. 411.

¹⁷ ASSEMANI, *Ibid.*, 197.

¹⁸ ASSEMANI, *Ibid.*, 101.

¹⁹ ASSEMANI, *Ibid.*, p. 90.

O Lord, and thy Mother, are the only beings who in every way are beautiful: for in thee, O Lord, there is no shadow of blemish, and no stain in thy Mother.”²⁰ Here is St. Ephrem’s way of expressing the Divine Motherhood of Mary: “Son of the Father, Son of Mary, thou art the one Word of God; born supernaturally of the Mother, naturally of the Father, and in a new way of the Jordan: but of the River, the Mother and the Father thou art one and the same Child-God.”²¹ But when the saintly poet sings of the Nativity of our Lord, and the tenderly human relations of the Mother and Child, we are reminded irresistibly of a Francis of Assisi; and, we fancy, St. Ignatius himself would use this same language in his exstatic adoration of the humanity of Christ. There is an intimate kinship in all the Saints. In one of these hymns, the Blessed Mother thus addresses the Divine Infant: “A tender dove is bearing the eagle of ages, bearing it and singing the while: O wonderful Birdling, who wishes to be nourished in this little nest of mine, let me sing thee a melody that will move the Cherubim.”²² And again, after speaking of the glories of the heavenly court, and in climax after climax rising to the light inaccessible in which the eternal Word dwells, the poet continues: “But if love urge the mind to seek him ever, intrude not near the throne of burning spirits, but come rather, and see him: in the arms of Mary and Joseph: the hidden in the Father has revealed Himself, through a Virgin, to mortal men.”²³ “The glorious Sun has contracted itself, to hide in a white cloud.”²⁴

These are but chance gleanings, however, from the rich, waving fields of pure poetry in the writings of St. Ephrem—writings that for long ages have been regions unexplored. We find here the same substantial accord with the teachings of the living Church of today, as in all the great and better-known Fathers of antiquity. But who can guess the purposes of Providence, in now restoring St. Ephrem to his greatness of sixteen centuries ago? If this Encyclical be a prophecy—of the coming reunion of the East and the West, God speed the day! The Holy Father could scarcely have selected a more fitting Patron as a harbinger

²⁰ BICKELL, *Carmina Nisibena*, n. 27.

²¹ LAMY, II, p. 558.

²² LAMY, *Ibid.*, p. 543.

²³ LAMY, *Ibid.*, p. 581.

²⁴ LAMY, *Ibid.*, p. 622.

of the long desired event. For all the great religious bodies of the East, who revere St. Ephrem as the common Father and Master of all their creeds, can surely find, in his teaching, a way to unity with the one Universal Church. And thus it is not alone as the sublime religious poet, nor as the mighty Christian orator only, that St. Ephrem rises before our eyes, at this late day, out of the mist of centuries; but it is the Master of Holy Scripture, and the Witness to our ancient heritage of Faith; it is the Guide—to those great nations which were young and flourishing in his day, in the 4th century, and now, after their age-long burial, are young again: such in brief is Ephrem the Syrian, the humble Deacon of Edessa, on whom the Supreme Pontiff has now conferred the title and honors of Doctor of the Universal Church.

REV. J. GORAYEB, S. J.

Woodstock College,

Woodstock, Md.